SPIRITUAL COUNSEL:

OR THE

Father's Advice

TO HIS

CHILDREN.

By *JOHN NORRIS*, M. A.

Rector of *Bemerton* near *Sarum*.

Hear ye Children the Instruction of a Father, and Attend to know Understanding, Prov. 4. 1.

LONDON:

Printed for S. Manship, at the *Ship* over-against the *Royal Exchange* in *Cornhill*, MDCCVIII.

Price Stitch'd 3 *d.* or 20 *s.* a Hundred.

The Father's ADVICE TO HIS CHILDREN.

My Dear Children,

IF ever you live to Maturity of Age, and I happen to die before you do ſo, remember and conſider the Words of a careful and affectionate Father, touch'd with a moſt lively Concern both for your Preſent and Future Welfare, but chiefly your Future, that of your precious and immortal Souls, which muſt be either Eternally Happy or Miſerable in another World, according as you live and demean your ſelves in this. And therefore,

1. Be ſure that you dedicate your tender Years to the Service and Glory of God, and that you remember your Creator in the days of your Youth. You will then have moſt need to remember him, and you will then be moſt apt to forget him. Set therefore a double guard upon that part of your Life, and be then eſpecially diligent to remember and be mindful of him that made you. It will make your Duty Eaſie, and your Lives Happy. You will have the Comfort of it when you come to Die, beſides the conſtant Satisfaction it will afford you all your Lives long.

2. And as you make Religion your *First*, ſo be ſure you make it your *greateſt* and *chiefeſt* Care: Not a *By-work* (as the general manner of the World is) but your *Principal Concern*, the *great Buſineſs* and *Employment* of your *whole Life*. For indeed *Religion* is your *greateſt Concernment*, and therefore ought to be your *main Buſineſs* and *Employment*. *Solomon* tells you, That to *Fear God* and *keep his Commandments*, is the *Whole of Man*: And a Greater than he That 'tis the *One thing needful*. 'Tis *For* this that you have your *Being* in this World, and 'tis *By* this that you can hope for a *Well-being* in that which is to come. Your *Eternal Happineſs* depends upon it, and therefore as you tender that, ſee that you apply your ſelves chiefly to the *Fear* and *Love of God*, and the *keeping of his Commandments*; and that you make *Religion* the *great Affair* and *Employment* of your *Mind* and *Life*.

3. And as you make it your *Great*, ſo be ſure you make it your *Daily Employment*; as you certainly will if you truly make it your *Great* one. Let not a day paſs over your Heads without *Serious Thoughts of God*, and a due Performance of *Religious Homage* to him; and endeavor to ſpend every day as well as you can, and to make every day a ſtep towards *Eternity*. You do ſo in a *Natural*, and therefore take care you do ſo alſo in a *Spiritual Senſe*, making every day ſome *Preparation* for your *Laſt*, conſidering that you know not when that will be; that you have but a few days in all to ſpend, and how

how precious every Portion even of the longeſt Life muſt needs be, upon which an *Eternity* depends. And therefore for your better Improvement of every day, I adviſe you,

4. To accuſtom your ſelves upon your firſt waking in the Morning, to meditate ſeriouſly upon God, to offer him your firſt Thoughts, and moſt ſolemnly to dedicate to him your ſelves, your Souls and Bodies, your Deſigns and your Undertakings, and the whole ſucceeding day, which in all likelihood will be the better ſpent for having been ſo happily begun. And as you thus begin the day with God, ſo let it end with him too, making him the laſt ſubject of your Meditations when you lie down in your Beds, and as you compoſe your ſelves to your nightly Reſt; that ſo you may both wake and ſleep in God.

5. The two Extremities of the day being thus ſecured, there will be the leſs danger of Miſpending the middle parts of it. But for the better Security and Improvement of theſe, let me adviſe you in general, to accuſtom your ſelves to make Solemn Prayer to God in Private upon your Knees, at leaſt three times a day, (beſides occaſional and leſs ſolemn Ejaculations) and as much oftner as you find your ſelves diſpoſed. And if theſe times be fix'd and ſtated to ſome certain Hours, ſo much the better, that ſo the return of the Hour appointed may as a Natural Inſtrument, put you in mind of your Devotions.

6. To make which the more Orderly, pray,

take care, that the first thing that you do in the Morning assoon as you are up and conveniently habited, be to Sanctifie and Hallow the day, by a solemn devotional Address of your selves to God in Prayer. Let this be the first thing you do, I mean before you take any Secular or worldly thing in hand. For there is one certain thing that I would advise you to do even before you say your Prayers, and that is, to read as attentively and considerately as you can a Chapter in the Bible. This I would have you do every Morning before you go to your Prayers, which you will find to be a most excellent and advantagious Practice, not only as serving to inform your Understandings, and bring you acquainted with the H. Scriptures, but also to warm and quicken your Wills and Affections, and to tune your Souls, and put them into a due Composure for your following Devotion. For which the two other more solemn Seasons are, some time about the middle of the day, and at night when you go to Bed. At which time besides your ordinary Devotion, as in the other two, you would do well to take a Review of the day past, and particularly examine how you have spent it, not only that if you have done well you may glorifie God; and if ill, may humble your selves before him, and make your Peace with him before you commit your selves to sleep; but also that by this Exercise you may know what progress you make in Piety, what the State of your Souls is, and how Accounts stand between you and God; and may also learn

to

to ſpend every day the better, as you will find yourſelves induced to do, by the very proſpect of that returning Account which you are to render of it to your ſelves at Night.

7. Beſides which *Nightly Review*, I think it very expedient that you ſhould ſet apart ſome certain Seaſons, wherein to ſit in more ſolemn Judgment upon your ſelves, to review and take account of your paſt Lives, to call your Sins to remembrance, to confeſs and bewail them, and to humble your Souls & Bodies in the Preſence of God for them, and to form new Reſolutions, and new Acts of Abhorrence and Deteſtation againſt them. Theſe days I would have to be purely & intirely days of Religion, to be wholly ſpent in Reading, Prayer, and Divine Meditation. Sequeſter your ſelves upon theſe days from all Worldly Buſineſs, retire from all Company, and let nothing be the Imployment of them, but what relates to the *Grand Affair*. And that theſe days may be thus ſtrictly kept and ſpent, I would have their return to be but *Monthly*, ſuppoſe the firſt or laſt *Friday* in every Month. I the rather mention *Friday*, becauſe it is one of the *Church-Faſts*, & I would have you make theſe days to be days of *Faſting* as well as of *Prayer*, that ſo both together may compleat your *Repentance* and *Humiliation*. The great Advantage of thus frequently making up your Accounts in theſe your Nightly and Monthly Reckonings, you will find to be chiefly this, that it will greatly contribute to the preſent Amendment of your Lives, your Repentances

thus

thus keeping pace with your Miſcarriages; and to the eaſe of your Conſciences when you come to die. At which time you will find it work enough to engage with your bodily Diſorders, and to attend to the proper Duties of your preſent Condition, tho' you have not the Courſe of a whole Life to unravel, nor a train of Actions long paſt and long forgotten to bring to remembrance. And indeed 'twill be a ſad thing to have then Sums to caſt up, and Reckonings to make, when you are Sick and in Pain, and have neither Underſtanding, nor Memory, nor Leiſure, nor Will to recollect your ſelves.

8. In theſe and all other times of your Devotion, let me further adviſe you to obſerve this General Rule, never to put your ſelves into the Preſence of God by Prayer, till you have firſt recollected your ſelves by awful thoughts of the Divine Majeſty, and have by ſome ſhort but ſerious Meditation, compoſed your Minds to a reverent and devout Performance of ſo Important and Divine a Duty. For beſides that 'tis rude, and ſavours of Profaneneſs, to ruſh into the Preſence of God without previous Conſideration: He that approaches him ſo Irreverently at firſt, is not like to beſpeak him with much greater Reverence afterwards. Therefore compoſe your Spirit before you begin, and be not like one that goes to play upon his Inſtrument before he has tuned it. 'Tis the Advice of a Wiſer Perſon than I, *Before thou Prayeſt*, ſays the Son of *Syrach*, *prepare thy ſelf, and be not as one that tempteth the Lord*:

9. After you have thus duely diſpoſed your

Heart,

Heart, then you may with decency proceed to bend your *Knee*. And whenever you pray to God, be ſure you do it with all that Humility and Reverence that becomes a *Creature* and a *Sinner*, ſpeaking both to his *Maker* & his *Judge*, and with all poſſible affectionate Warmth and Fervour of Spirit; this being the very Life and Soul of Prayer, and the only thing that diſtinguiſhes it from pronouncing ſo many words, or the going over in ones mind ſo many thoughts. Let Earneſtneſs therefore and Fervour of Affection, be conſtant Ingredients in all your Prayers, eſpecially when you Pray for the Forgiveneſs of your Sins. Pray then yet *more earneſtly*, as your Saviour did in the Garden, when he was about to ſuffer for them. And ſure one would think, that he who begs God to forgive him his Sins, and underſtands how great a thing he asks, and is ſenſible in what need he ſtands of it, and withal how unworthy to receive it, and conſiders the greatneſs of the Perſon of whom he begs it, and of the Price by which the very Poſſibility of it was purchaſed, & how much Goodneſs that is which beſtows it, and conſequently how high a Favour it muſt be in caſe he receive it, need not be further minded or admoniſh'd of being Earneſt and Fervent in his Devotion.

10. But that you may Pray fervently, be ſure you pray *Attentively*. This is neceſſary to the other, as well as upon its own account, it being impoſſible that a Man ſhould be moved or affected with what he either does not at all underſtand, or does not conſider. But indeed theſe mutually

tually help one another. Warmth of Affection will make Men Attentive, and Attention will help to procure and excite Affection. Be ſure therefore that you uſe great Attention and Fixation of Mind in your Prayers, that you attend heedfully both to the Matter of your Prayers, and to that awful Majeſty you pray to, & that your Thoughts do not wander from either of them. Always remembring, that there can hardly be a greater piece of Irreverence, than to approach God by a Bodily movement, when our Spirits are abſent from him, and ingaged upon other Objects: That a Prayer ſo put up, is not only loſt and thrown away, but profaned; and that inſtead of performing a Duty, we commit a Sin, by taking God's Name in vain. And let me tell you, that this is the worſt way of taking God's Name in vain, becauſe we do it ſo deliberately, and under a pretence of worſhipping him. But that you may not be guilty of this, let me adviſe you,

11. Not only at your firſt Addreſs to poſſeſs your Mind with a due Senſe of the Greatneſs of that Infinite Majeſty you Pray to, and of the Moment of the things you Pray for, to Simplify and recollect your Spirits by Silence & Repoſe, and as an *Habitual* Remedy, to be looſe and diſingaged from the World, to have as little Buſineſs and as few Deſires as may be; but alſo to accuſtom your ſelves, whenever you happen to hear the Name of God mention'd to make a reverential Pauſe, and form within your ſelves an inward Act of Adoration and Worſhip: which

you

you will find not only to be a good practice in it ſelf, but alſo to tend to good, as leaving and fixing a Pious Impreſſion upon your Spirits; whereby you will become leſs apt to profane that great & venerable Name in your more ſolemn Addreſſes, which you have thus accuſtomed your ſelves to reverence, when even occaſionally mention'd.

12. And as you take care that your Spirits accompany your Bodies in your Prayers, ſo let it be your next care that your Bodies accompany your Spirits. I mean that you join Bodily Worſhip to your Spiritual, & uſe the moſt lowly & reverential Geſtures and Poſtures that you can poſſibly put your ſelves into. Such as Bowing the Head, Elevation of the Hands & Eyes, bending the Knees, and even Proſtration it ſelf upon more ſolemn Occaſions. And this not only becauſe God has a right to his whole Creature, & conſequently to the worſhip of the Body as well as of the Soul; but alſo becauſe Bodily Worſhip contributes mightily to the advantage of Spiritual; and the Soul not only ſignifies & expreſſes her Devotion by the lowly poſtures of her Body, but alſo cheriſhes and helps it forward. As ſome Men by acting an Angry Part, and putting on the outward air of Reſentment, begin at laſt to enter into the Spirit of that Paſſion, which they intended only to perſonate.

13. If you find your ſelves tempted to lay aſide Bodily Worſhip upon the pretence of worſhipping God in Spirit and in Truth, I would have you look upon it as no other than a Suggeſtion of the Devil, who is willing to defraud God of one half of his due, the Service

Service of the Body, under the pretence of its being unneceſſary (tho' he would fain have had it himſelf, when he would have bribed our Saviour to *fall down* and *worſhip him*) and your ſelves of that advantage which the Humiliations of your Bodies would derive upon the Diſpoſition of your Souls. But for your Satisfaction in this Point (not to trouble you with any Critical Remarks upon the words *Spirit* and *Truth*) you need only conſider, that as God under the Ceremonial Law did not command the Worſhip of the Body without the Engagement of the Spirit, ſo neither does he now require that of the Spirit, without the Fellowſhip & Communion of the Body. And that as a Religion conſiſting in Externals only, is not worthy of an Intellectual Nature, ſo a Worſhip purely Mental and Intellectual is too Abſtract & Sublime for a Nature allied to Senſe, and depending upon it. But our Saviour is the beſt Interpreter of his own Law, and his Practice the beſt Comment. He to be ſure was the moſt Spiritual Worſhipper that ever was, & yet none more remarkable than he for uſing Bodily Proſtrations, from which he would not excuſe himſelf even upon the Croſs it ſelf: For when he was to ſurrender up his Soul into the Hands of his Father, he did it in a poſture expreſſive of Reverence and Devotion, *He bowed his Head*, the Text ſays, *and gave up the Ghoſt*. But for this it may ſuffice, that God has given you a Soul and a Body in Conjunction, and you are to *Serve* and *Worſhip him* in the ſame manner as he has *made you*.

14. But this Compoſure of your Bodies into a reve-

reverential and devotional poſture, to which I adviſe you in your Cloſets, ought more eſpecially to be regarded and obſerv'd in the publick Worſhip of God (that in the very Nature of it, requiring viſible Teſtimonies and outward Tokens of Veneration) which I would have you conſtantly to frequent in all the parts of it, eſpecially thoſe two ſo much diſregarded and neglected by ſome of late (which yet are the only parts that properly deſerve the Name of *Worſhip*) *the Prayers of the Church*, and *the Adminiſtration of the Holy Sacrament*. In all which let your *outward Deportment*, as well as *inward Spirit*, be *Grave*, *Serious* and *Compoſed*, ſuch as becomes the Place and Preſence you are in, and the Duties you are about, and that decent Reſpect which you owe to to the Aſſemblies of the Saints.

15. So much may ſerve for your Direction, as to the *Manner* of your Devotion. Concerning the *Matter* of it, I need only mind you, that *Spiritual Bleſſings* are the things you are chiefly to Pray for; and that thoſe are alſo the things for which you are chiefly to give *Thanks*. For which you have a plain Preſident in that Divine Form of Prayer commended to our uſe by our Lord himſelf, in which the Preference is ſo far given to our *Spiritual Part* and *Concern*, that there is but *one Petition* for the things relating to the Good of this *Temporal Life*. And that too no farther than is requiſite to our preſent Suſtentation, *Give us this Day our Daily Bread*. In imitation of which it has pleaſed the Wiſdom

of our Church, in that large comprehenſive Office call'd the *Litany*, or general Supplication, to have but one Clauſe of Prayer, that directly and expreſly Petitions for the good of this Life, which is, *That it may pleaſe thee to give and preſerve to our uſe the kindly Fruits of the Earth, ſo as in due time we may enjoy them.* From which ('tis obſervable) without dwelling long upon it, ſhe immediately paſſes to the requeſting of true Repentance and Forgiveneſs of Sins, with which ſhe cloſes all. Wherein you may yet further obſerve, that though the Church in great Wiſdom, has thought requiſite to have but one Prayer of this ſort, and to drive off even that one among the laſt, yet with equal Wiſdom, ſhe thought fit not to make it the laſt of all, leſt ſuch a Cloſe of our *Devotion* ſhould leave behind it a reliſh of *Earthly Good* upon the taſte of the Soul. To prevent which ſhe concludes with a Petition of an higher Nature, *That it may pleaſe thee to give us true Repentance; to forgive us all our Sins, Negligences and Ignorances, and to endue us with the Grace of thy Holy Spirit, to amend our Lives according to thy Holy Word.*

16. To the Exerciſe of *Actual*, I would in the next place adviſe you to join the Practice of *Habitual* Prayer. By which I mean, that you would ſo accuſtom your ſelves to the Contemplation of God in and through all his Creatures, that none of thoſe Objects which ſurround you may ever preſent themſelves to your Senſes without awakening the Idea of God in your Minds, and admoniſhing you of that abſolut

an

and intire Dependence you and all Creatures have upon him. So that where-ever you are, or with whomſoever you converſe, or whatever your Buſineſs or Occupation be, you may always have a lively Senſe of God ever returning upon you, and mixing it ſelf with all your Ingagements, and Sanctifying even your moſt Indifferent Actions; that your Hearts may be always flaming with his Love, and your Imaginations fix'd and ſtay'd in his Holy Fear; your Paſſions being in profound Silence and awful Repoſe, and you your ſelves always ready and diſpoſed to perform thoſe more expreſs Acts of Worſhip, which in their proper Seaſons you owe to God. Whom however you may be truly and properly ſaid continually to worſhip, and ſo to fulfil that Exhortation of the Apoſtle of *Praying without ceaſing*, when you have learnt thus to carry about with you a conſtant Habit of Divine and Religious Thoughts.

17. This *Habitual Prayer* is the Perfection of Devotion, and the trueſt Mark of a Heart thoroughly warm'd and animated with the Spirit of Piety and Religion. The Images of thoſe things which we dearly love, will frequently return upon us, and we are always diſpoſed to give them entertainment as often as they offer themſelves. And from our doing ſo, we may conclude how well we love them. And were the Love of God as thoroughly kindled in our Hearts, had we but the ſame Paſſion for him, that we have for ſome ſenſible Objects, we ſhould find his great Idea upon all occaſions

preſent to our Thoughts, and that every thing would bring him to our Remembrance; our waking and our ſleeping Thoughts would be upon him, and he would enter in upon us at every ſenſe, we ſhould ſee him and feel him in all things, be always under a quick and affecting Senſe of him, and always in a ready Diſpoſition for his Worſhip and Service. Thus would the State of our Minds be, if we had them once truly touch'd with the Love of God, to which alſo this way of Habitual Prayer is the moſt certain and compendious Method, it being impoſſible that a Man ſhould ſo continually put himſelf in the Preſence of ſo amiable a Being, without being taken and raviſh'd with the Perfection of his Beauty.

18. But after all (my good Children) I would have you think and remember, that a juſt and upright Converſation is the beſt way of Worſhip, and a holy and good Life the beſt Prayer; and that then you ſerve God moſt acceptably, when you keep his Commandments, and live in conſtant Obedience to his Will. When in the Language of the Prophet you do juſtly, and love Mercy, and walk humbly with your God; or as the Apoſtle expreſſes it, when *denying all Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, you live Godly, Righteouſly, and Soberly in this preſent World.* You may meet with ſome perhaps, that will tell you by way of reproach, that this is *Morality.* And you may tell them again, that they could not have call'd it by a better name. That it is ſuch Morality as our Saviour taught

in

in his Sermon upon the Mount, and of which his whole Life was the moſt ſhining Example; ſuch Morality as was taught by his great Forerunner the holy Baptiſt, and by all the Prophets that went before him, and by his Apoſtles that came after him. In fine, ſuch Morality as is abſolutely neceſſary to the preſent order of this World, and to the Happineſs of the next, to our Admiſſion into Heaven, & to our Enjoyment of God there, whom (as we are expreſly told) *without Holineſs no Man ſhall ever ſee.*

19. Now in order to a Holy Life, I ſhall not think it neceſſary (at leaſt in theſe Papers deſign'd for more particular Remarks) to deſcribe to you the ſeveral parts of it, they are ſo plainly and fully laid down in the H. Scriptures, and ſo largely commented on and explain'd in thoſe many excellent Practical Treatiſes, which by the good Providence of God we of this Age and Nation enjoy. To which therefore I chuſe rather to refer you, adviſing you in the firſt place to be very Diligent and Conſtant in reading the Bible, eſpecially the New Teſtament, and in that particularly our Lords Sermon upon the Mount, which you would do well to get by heart. And among Human Writings, recommending to you chiefly B. *Taylor's* Holy Living and Dying, the *Whole Duty of Man*, Dr. *Sherlock's* two Books of *Death and Judgment*, *The Country Parſon's Advice to his Pariſhioners*, *The Chriſtian Monitor* containing an Earneſt Exhortation to an Holy Life, and *Thomas a Kempis* of the *Imitation of Chriſt*. Which laſt Book, tho' not of ſo nice and artificial a Compoſure as the reſt, ſeems

ſeems yet to be written in ſuch an excellent and truly Chriſtian Spirit, and to have ſuch a Vein of Piety and Simplicity running thro' it, as is beyond all the Finneſſes and Imbelliſhments that Art can give. Leaving you therefore a while with this good Company, for a full Inſtruction in your Chriſtian Duty, I deſire that after you have learn'd it, you would lend your Attention to the following Advices, which I ſhall ſuggeſt to you for your better Aſſiſtance in the *Practice* and *Performance* of it.

20. The firſt great and general Inſtrument of a Holy Life is *Conſideration*, by which I mean the actual Attention and Advertency of our Minds to thoſe things, the Knowledge and Theory of which, we have already in Power and general Habit. This, in relation to Civil Action and Buſineſs, or the Management of Affairs, is call'd *Preſence of Mind*; but in the Concernment of Morality and Well-living, it uſually goes by the Name of *Conſideration*, and implies an actual View of thoſe Practical Truths, whereof we have an habitual Notion or Knowledge. This, next to the Grace of God, is the great Principle of a Good Life; and the want of this is the main Cauſe, into which the Sin and Miſery of Mankind is generally to be reſolv'd. Infinitely more periſh thro' want of *Conſideration*, than either thro *Ignorance* or *Infidelity*. *Ignorance*, indeed, and *Error*, of one ſort or other, I ſuppoſe to be the true Cauſe of all our Miſcarriages, (for if we Thought rightly, we ſhould Will and Act rightly too) but as actual Ignorance is more common than habitual, ſo I ſuppoſe

poſe more Men to miſcarry thro' Actual than thro Habitual Ignorance, that is, for want of *Conſidering*, than for want of *Knowing*. Let me therefore adviſe you in the firſt place, and in general, to apply your ſelves, with all poſſible Care and Diligence, to the Practice of Conſideration; to have in your Minds a preſent & actual View of thoſe things which you know, both concerning your Duty, and the ſeveral Motives and Ingagements to the Performance of it. Ever remembring that 'tis not the knowing a great deal, but the due conſidering of that little a Man knows, that muſt make him either *Wiſe or Good*.

21. Now among the particular Objects of Conſideration, I think it adviſable that you ſhould by repeated Reflections endeavour to fix and imprint upon your Minds, and have always in actual View *this Thought*, That *Sin is the Greateſt of all Evils*. Which Sentiment, as long as you preſerve a bright and clear Senſe of it in your Underſtandings, will ſecure your Wills from all poſſibility of Error. 'Tis the loſing the View of this Truth, by ſome Cloud of Paſſion intervening, that makes Men Sin; and tis the recovering of it again that, next to the Grace of God, leads them to Repentance. Now the ſame Principle that makes Men repent after they have ſinn'd, would, if then duly attended to, have kept them from Sinning. As this will certainly do. For it being impoſſible that a Man ſhould will Evil as Evil; he that commits Sin, muſt for that inſtant think it at leaſt a *Comparative* Good, which he can never do, if he actually thinks it the greateſt Evil (there being then no greater

Evil

Evil ſuppoſed, in reſpect of which it may receive that Eſtimation) and conſequently can never commit it, while he continues actually in that Judgment, unleſs you will ſuppoſe him to will Evil formally as Evil, which is utterly impoſſible. Take great care therefore, to have this Principle well lodg'd & fix'd in your Underſtandings, That Sin is the *Greateſt Evil.*

22. This Conſideration will ſuggeſt to you another, as the Conſequence and Improvement of it, which is, That Sin muſt neceſſarily be repented of one time or other. There is an unavoidable Neceſſity for it. I do not mean only a conditional Neceſſity, if we will be pardon'd, but that it is ſimply and abſolutely neceſſary, that is, That the Judgment of Sins being the greateſt Evil (however ſilenc'd and interrupted for a time) will infallibly return again upon us; and we muſt and ſhall one time or other repent of it, and wiſh we had never committed it, either in this Life (if we be ſo happy) in order to our Pardon and Salvation, or at leaſt in the other, when the Powers and Faculties of our Souls ſhall be more awakened, and our Spiritual Eyes ſo open'd, as to ſee things in their proper Colours, and in their true Dimenſions. Now conſider this, eſpecially when you find your ſelves tempted to any Sin, Conſider then, what you are about to do, a thing that you muſt again undo, and wiſh, one time or other, that you had never done, and ſo whether with ſuch Thoughts about you, you can be guilty of ſuch a Folly.

23. But to render this Conſideration of Sins being

being the greateſt Evil, & an Evil conſequently that muſt and will be repented of the more effectual, my next Advice is, That you would joyn to it, the Conſideration of the utter Emptineſs and Vanity of all thoſe Pleaſures and Enjoyments which tempt to the Commiſſion of it. A thing which every Man's Reaſon *may* ſuggeſt to him, & which every Man's Experience *does*, and yet which ſo few are actually, and in all Inſtances convinc'd of; that forgetting their Diſappointments, they run again as greedily to their Enjoyments as if they had never made trial of their Vanity. Inſomuch that the great Wiſdom of *Solomon* gave proof of it ſelf in nothing, more than in having obtain'd at length (tho' late) a thorough Senſe, an abiding Conviction of the Worlds Vanity, which was the top of his Wiſdom, and the reſult of his many Experiments. Endeavour therefore to poſſeſs your Minds of the like Conviction, & to fortifie your former Conſideration, of Sin's being the greateſt Evil, with this additional Perſuaſion, of the Vanity & Nullity of all thoſe Pleaſures which may allure to the Commiſſion of it, that ſo having lightned this oppoſite Scale of the Ballance, as well as added weight to the other, this laſt, by this farther advantage, may not fail to weigh down; and you may be effectually ſecured from tranſgreſſing your Duty, when the *Evil* of it appears ſo *great*, and the *Pleaſure ſo ſmall*.

24. Which that you may be, extend your Thoughts yet further, and conſider with your ſelves, at what rate, and to what degree, God hates

hates Sin. God who is infinite Wiſdom, and infinite Love, all whoſe Wills are govern'd and directed by the eternal Rules of Order and Reaſon, and are from all Eternity form'd and laid out in Number, Weight, and Meaſure, who aſſigns to every Object its due Proportion of Love & Hatred, loving nothing but what is truly Lovely, and ſo far as it is ſuch; and hating nothing but what is truly hateful, & ſo far as it is ſuch. I ſay, conſider how this great & juſt Diſpenſer of his Love & Hatred hates Sin; & let your Hatred of it take its meaſure from his. And if you would know how great this his Hatred to Sin is, you may meaſure it with the ſame Line wherewith St. *John* does his Love towards Mankind, *So God loved the World*, ſays St. *John*, *that he gave his only begotten Son*, &c. And ſo may we ſay, So God hated Sin, that he gave his only begotten Son to be a Sacrifice and an Atonement for it. God's Hatred to Sin, was, it ſeems, ſo great, that he himſelf only could pacifie his Anger for the Commiſſion of it; which alſo was ſo great, that he choſe rather that his own beloved Son ſhould bleed & die for it, than that it ſhould go unpuniſh'd. And now conſider with your ſelves, whether you can conceive a greater degree of Hatred than this. How could God poſſibly hate Sin more, or how could he give a more ſenſible & convincing demonſtration of his Hatred of it? And if God thought it Juſt & Meet to puniſh Sin ſo ſeverely in the Perſon of his own Son, who alſo was ready to ſink under the weight & burthen of it, tho' but for a few hours under it; then conſider

yet

yet further with your ſelves, how heavy the Stroke of Divine Juſtice will fall upon all perſevering & impenitent Sinners, when having no Intereſt in the Paſſion of their Redeemer, they ſhall ſuffer as fully for themſelves, as if no Mediator had interpoſed; and how little they will be able to ſtand under the weight of God's diſpleaſure to all Eternity.

25. To theſe Thoughts, concerning the Nature of Sin, & the Conſequences of it, you may yet add a further Improvement, by conſidering that this is the only Evil which was thought worthy of the undertaking of the Son of God to deliver us from. In the heighth of all that Love & Affection which the Compaſſionate Saviour of the World had for periſhing Mankind, he did not think it worth his while to reſcue them from Pain, Sickneſs, Poverty, Diſgrace, or any of the common Afflictions & Uneaſineſſes of Human Life, no not even from Death it ſelf. All theſe he ſeems to have over-look'd, as beneath his Notice, & unworthy his Regard; however we are apt to think them the only Evils. Only Sin & Damnation appear'd to him to be Evils of ſuch a Magnitude, that he could not endure the thought of our being ſubjected to them; and to deliver us from theſe, was indeed thought an Undertaking worthy of a Redeemer from Heaven, and from the very Boſom of God. Conſider this, till the Conſideration of it has given you ſome Idea and Apprehenſion of the Evil of Sin; if not ſuch as our Saviour had in the Garden, when he was about to ſuffer for it; yet at leaſt

ſuch

ſuch as may ſerve to deter you from the Commiſſion of it. And do not voluntarily plunge your ſelves into ſuch a State of Miſery for the Prevention of which, and only for the Prevention of which, the Lord of Life was content to Die.

26. After you have thus arm'd and fortifi'd your Minds, by the Conſideration of the great Evil of Sin, turn your Glaſs upon the contrary ſide, and let your next Proſpect be of the Beauty and Excellency of Goodneſs and Vertue, of Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs. Conſider how highly reaſonable it is in it ſelf, and how becoming of you, as rational Creatures; how ſuitable to the order & end of your Beings; and how truly perfective of your Natures; how it conduces to the Inlargement of your Underſtandings, to the true Freedom and Redemption of your Wills (for *if the Son ſhall make you Free, you ſhall be free indeed*) and to the Calm of your Paſſions; and indeed to the general Health, Pleaſure, Satisfaction, Tranquility, & Repoſe of your Souls, which then enjoy moſt Content, when in due Frame and Temper, when their Thoughts are beſt govern'd, & their Wills and Movements are moſt Conformable to Order. Conſider that Goodneſs is the Natural State of the Soul, & how much ſhe is at eaſe, & how well ſhe feels her ſelf when in that State: as on the contrary, how reſtleſs and uneaſie ſhe is, how full of Pain & rational Diſplacency, when otherwiſe affected and diſpoſed, than by the Law of God, & that of her own Being, ſhe ought to be. Conſider

ſider what a natural Relation and Connexion there is between Holineſs and Happineſs; that the latter is the neceſſary Effect and Reſult of the former; which procures and produces it as a Natural and Phyſical Cauſe; inſomuch, that the very inward Reaſon and Moral Diſtinction of Good and Evil, is taken from its natural Aptneſs, or Unaptneſs, to the Intereſt and Happineſs of Human Life. Conſider, how of its own proper Nature, it tends to the true Advantage and Benefit of Man, in all his Capacities, both as a Solitary, and as a Sociable Creature; how it procures our Happineſs on Earth, and what a neceſſary preparative and diſpoſition it is (not only as a *Poſitive*, but as a *Natural* Condition) to qualifie us for that of Heaven, the Fruition of God, into whoſe Likeneſs we muſt firſt awake before we can be ſatisfied with his Beauty, and be partakers of the Divine Nature before we can enjoy it. Conſider how pleaſant and full of Satisfaction a holy Life is, in the preſent Exerciſe and actual Diſcharge of it; (there being no Joys like the Joys of Religion, and no Peace like the Peace of God) and how pleaſant and raviſhing upon the Review, eſpecially the laſt, when we come to look back upon a Life well ſpent upon our Death-beds, and can thence alſo with Comfort and Satisfaction look forward into the unconceivable as well as unſpeakable Joys of Eternity, the laſt Crown and Reward of a holy and well order'd Life.

27. As a Corollary to this Conſideration, let me ſuggeſt to you another: Whenever you are

tempted to Sin by *Pleaſure* (for that's the great Bate and Allurement to Sin) conſider that the Pleaſures of Innocence are much greater, even at preſent, ſetting aſide all regard to *After-Happineſs*, much more if that be alſo taken into the account. And that therefore the true Queſtion or Competition does not lie here, whether you will do your Duty or enjoy Pleaſure (for you may do both;) nor whether you will chuſe to Sin or want Pleaſure (for you may do neither;) but whether you will enjoy the Pleaſures of Sin, or the Pleaſures of Innocence and a holy Life; the Pleaſures of Sin that are but for a ſeaſon, or the Pleaſures of Righteouſneſs that endure for ever. This you will find (if you well attend to it) to be the true State of the Queſtion, whenever you are tempted to Sin; and by putting it into theſe Terms, you will quickly perceive the Abſurdity of the ſtrongeſt Temptation wherewith the Devil can aſſault you. Therefore conſider it well.

28. And when you have let your Thoughts ſufficiently expatiate upon this great and double Proſpect of the evil of Sin, and the Reaſon and Advantage of a holy Life, let them tranſport you for a while into the other World, among ſeparate and departed Spirits, thoſe whoſe ſeaſon and opportunity of Action is over, upon whom the Sun of Grace as well as of natural Life is gone down; and that Night come in which no Man can work; and who are either in actual Happineſs and actual Miſery, or at leaſt in a certain and unalterable Order and Deſigna-

Deſignation to thoſe reſpective States. Conſider with your ſelves ſeriouſly the Condition of theſe Spirits, and what Thoughts and Sentiments they have of things. What they think of a ſinful, and what ſenſe they have of a holy and religious Life. What inward Rejoycings, and raptures of Spirit, thoſe have who were ſo wiſe and happy, as to apply themſelves to the latter; and how they do now juſtifie and approve their Conduct, bleſſing and admiring the Grace of God. And with what Anguiſh, Rage, Self-condemnation and Regret, thoſe return upon themſelves, who lived and indulged themſelves in the former. What Retractations! What Repentances! How do they unwiſh their Thoughts and their Actions, their Deſigns and their Undertakings, their Buſineſs and Employments, their Leagues and their Friendſhips, their Converſations and their merry Meetings, their Jeſts upon Religion and upon good Men, yea and their very *Being*! How do they unwiſh all theſe things; and how paſſionately do they wiſh again for thoſe Opportunities which they once had; and what a value do they ſet upon that Time which they can never again recover, and which you perhaps miſpend and trifle away!

29. But that you may no longer do ſo, conſider that Eternity is the only conſiderable State of Man, and that therefore the great and proper Buſineſs and work of Time ought to be, to make preparation for it. Conſider, that after a Man has lived ſo long in the World, as to come to the uſe and Exerciſe of his Reaſon, it

will be high time to think of going out of it again, and to prepare for that World which is to last, and wherein he is to continue for ever. For 'tis so late before we come to the use of our Reason, and the rest of the time we have to spend here afterwards is so short, and withal so very uncertain, that the longest liver had not need to mis-employ any part of his Time, but rather study all the possible ways of improving it. Especially if it be further consider'd, that the time of this Life is the only Opportunity for transacting the great Affair of Eternity. You have it now in your Power to be Happy, to make your great Fortune, and to secure your Final State; but it will not be always so. Your Day will end, and your Night will come, & God will not give you another turn of Probation, a second Trial; and therefore it highly concerns you to make the most of this; and to work while 'tis Day, before the Night come, when no Man can work.

30. If you are not yet sufficiently moved and affected with a Sense of these things, Consider what Sentiments & apprehensions of them, you will have when you come to Die, what your Notion and Sense of things will then be; what you will then think of a good and of a wicked Life, of your selves and of the World you live in, & are going from; what your thoughts will then be of all this Shew & Pageantry, which now so strikes the Senses, & engages the Hearts and Affections of Worldly Men. With what Contempt & Disdain will you now look, now you

are

are going out of the World, upon all those Pomps & Vanities which you renounc'd at your coming into it; & how will you wonder at your selves & all other Men, for having been so often in love with them, and so long captivated and enslaved by them; and for having so lately discover'd their utter emptiness & deceit. Consider how vain & insignificant will then appear to you all those *little Great* things which the World is now so eager upon, and runs so mad after, Honours, Riches, Pleasures, State & Grandeur, Birth and Quality, Dignities and Preferments; nay, even *Wit* and *Learning*, every thing but a good Life & a satisfied Conscience; and how well you will then wish you had lived. These will then be your Thoughts, & this will then be your great wish. Endeavour therefore to have the same Thoughts now that you will have then; & to live now as you will wish you had lived, when you come to Die.

31. And to make you the more sensible of this, that you may the better imagin to your selves that sense of things which you *will* have when you come to Die, it would be a very advantageous Practice, frequently to recollect with your selves what your Thoughts and apprehensions of things *really were*; and what Sentiments you *actually had*, when at any time under a great & dangerous state of Sickness. Recollect & Consider (which you may the more easily do, because 'tis a thing of actual Experiment) what you then thought of your selves, and of your Condition; of the Life that you had

led; of the time that you had mis-ſpent, of the infinite Vanities & Follies you had been guilty of, of the Duties you had neglected, or but carelesly and imperfectly perform'd; and of the World of Sins you had committed, and it may be till then, had lived in without Repentance; & of the Hell which you had deserv'd, & which for ought that you knew, you were then to be plung'd into, and for ever after to ſuffer in. Conſider I ſay, what thoughts you then actually had of theſe things; and withal, what ſtrong Reſolutions, Promiſes, and Vows, you then made to amend and reform your Lives in caſe it ſhould pleaſe God to Reprieve you a little longer from the Sentence of Death, by reſtoring you again to your Health. Well, he has done ſo; you have recover'd your Health, and you have loſt your Thoughts and Convictions. But what a ſtrange thing is this! Do you think that your Health makes any real Change in the nature & truth of Things? Thoſe things that were true in your Sickneſs, are they not as true now; & will they not be as true for ever? Or do you give greater credit to your Well than to your Sick Judgment? But conſider, that you would have the ſame thoughts when you are well, as you had in your Sickneſs, if you did but afford the ſame Attention, & had your Spiritual Senſes equally awake, & your outward Senſes equally diſingaged from worldly Objects. Conſider therefore, that thoſe Sick thoughts are moſt likely to be true, & according to the right Ideas of things; and that therefore they will certainly return again when

you

you ſhall be in the ſame Condition, and things ſhall be placed to you in the ſame Light. They will return again whenever you return to your ſelves, whenever you dare think; or if you ſhould by Arts of Diverſion ward them off for a while, yet you will be ſure to meet with them again when within View of Death; for they are part of her Train & Retinue. But 'tis beſt to have them before, & to live in the full Senſe, & under the conſtant direction and government of them. And indeed I cannot give you better inſtruction in order to a holy Life, than, in one word, ſo to lead your Lives, as you *ſhall* wiſh when you come to *Die*, and as you *have* already wiſh'd when you were *Sick*. And that you may do ſo,

32. I further adviſe you, to be much in the contemplation of the ſhortneſs and uncertainty of Life, & of the Day of God's Grace; whoſe limits are equally uncertain, and perhaps of a ſhorter & narrower compaſs than thoſe of your Natural Life. Be as much alſo in the Contemplation of the four laſt things, Heaven, Hell, Death & Judgment. Place your ſelves frequently upon your Death-beds, in your Coffins, and in your Graves. Act over frequently in your Minds, the Solemnity of your own Funerals; & entertain your Imaginations with all the lively Scenes of Morality. Meditate much upon the Places, and upon the Days of Darkneſs, & upon the Fewneſs of thoſe that ſhall be ſaved, and be always with your Hour-glaſs in your hands, meaſuring out your own little Span, & comparing it with the endleſs Circle of Eternity. Theſe are great.

great and engaging Thoughts, and such as will lessen, contract, nay, even annihilate any thing that shall be placed together, and compared with them.

33. There is indeed nothing that can diminish the Idea's of these things to a Mind assured of the Truth of them, but only that which represents every thing little. *Distance* & *Futurity*, the greatest Objects when a great way off, appear but little to the Eye; and Futurity represents things after the same manner to the Mind. Even Heaven & Hell, & Eternity it self, when eyed thro' this end of the Prospective, lose their just & native Dimensions, & draw up into so many little Points, while in the mean time, this World of ours which really is so, by this one single advantage of being present, makes a very bulky Figure, & appears as *Great* as it is *Near*. There is something in the very Name of the *World to come*, that even to those who are persuaded of its future Existence, lessens the Idea of it. But you are to consider, that this is a meer Fallacy of our *Imaginations*, as the other is of our *Senses*. For distance of time can make no more real Change in the true and natural dimensions of things, than Distance of Place can; & things Future, if of a certain and infallible event ought to have the same Power and Moment with us as if they were present; for that they will be one time or other, or else they are not now truly *Future*. This therefore I say, is a meer Fallacy of our Imaginations, to make the Futurity of a thing diminutive of its greatness. And tho' it be

a

a good Remedy againſt it, to remember that it is ſo, yet I think it would be a better, if in your Contemplations of theſe great Objects, you would no longer repreſent them to your Mind as *Futurities*, & things at a diſtance, but conſider them as *Preſent Realities*, as Objects that bear hard upon, and almoſt touch your very Eyes. Lay therefore the great and laſt Scenes of the Divine *Drama* often before you; place them in your very next View; and imagin every part of the dreadful Solemnity, as in preſent Tranſaction. Imagin to your ſelves, that you now hear the Arch-Angels Trump ſounding to Judgment, & calling you & all the Sons of *Adam* out of your Graves to meet your Judge, & receive from him your final Doom. Imagin that you ſee him coming in the Clouds of Heaven with Power & great Glory, with his Angelick Attendance about him, & the Standard of the Croſs carried before him. That you ſee his Throne erected, the Judgment ſet, & the Books open'd, That you behold all Nations gather'd together before him, & the Dead, both Small & Great, ſtanding at the Bar of his Juſtice, and, with trembling, waiting for the great deciding Sentence. Imagin that you ſee him making his Preparatory Diviſion, ſeparating them one from another, as a Shepherd divides his Sheep from the Goats; placing the Sheep upon his Right Hand, & the Goats upon the Left. And here ſtand a while and make a Puſe, and imagin if you can what Paſſions of Joy and Horror reſpectively, this preparatory Diſtinction will raiſe in the Parties concern'd,

concern'd, what a Deluge of Grief, Conſterna-tion and deſpair, muſt overflow the Spirits of them, whoſe Lot is to be placed on the Left hand! And what Tides and Inundations of Joy and Conſolation muſt break in upon thoſe Happy Souls, whom their ſmiling Judge, as an Omen of his following Favour, places on his Right Hand. Who can imagin the Sentiments that will follow upon ſuch a Signal, ſuch a Fatal Difference! But if you would have ſome Notion of it, try it upon your ſelves, fancy your ſelves now placed on the Right Hand, now on the Left, & ſee with what different Sentiments you will be affected. But to go on, imagin now after this viſible Diſtinction made of all Men, that you hear and ſee the Judge proceed to that which ſhall ſeparate them for ever, the laſt & irrepealable Sentence, ſaying to thoſe on his Right Hand, *Come ye Bleſſed*, &c. and then to thoſe on his Left, *Depart from me ye Curſed*, &c. Imagin, if you can, how differently theſe two Sentences will be pronounced, and how differently they will be receiv'd. Then let your Imagination go on and attend the Bleſſed into Heaven, and the Damned into Hell, where both enter upon their reſpective Portions, the greateſt Happineſs and the greateſt Miſery, and that not for a few Months, Years, or Ages, but for a whole Eternity, without the leaſt *Hope* or *Fear* of any End. Make all theſe things as preſent to your *Minds*, as the things of this World are to your *Senſes*, lay them out thus before you, contemplate them at hand, and when by this Anticipation

of thought you have thus Antedated the great things of Eternity, & have by that Faith, which is the Subſtance of things hoped for, & the Evidence of things not ſeen, given the next World the ſame Advantage that this has, that of being Preſent, you may then (as no longer living by Senſe but by Faith) ſecurely trample upon all thoſe Temptations of the World, to which you ſee others, for want of this intellectual View, yield every day; and may make the World it ſelf, with all its Pomp and Glory, vaniſh and diſappear when you pleaſe. But for your further Security.

34. Whenever you undertake any Set & Deliberate Action (for as for thoſe that are done by a ſudden prevention of Inſtinct, and as it were *Mechanical* Impulſe, as ſ. reading out ones Hands when one is like to fall, they come under no moral Eſtimation) I would have you ſit down & conſider, whether you can any way refer that Action to the Glory of God; whether you can truly & ſincerely ſay, Lord, I do this Action for thee, & in regard to thy Honour & Glory. And in caſe the Nature & Quality of the Action be ſuch, that it will not admit of an Affirmative Anſwer to that demand, I adviſe you not to meddle with that Action. For as that Action which has no end at all, but is done by the mere force of Mechaniſm, is no *Human* Action, ſo that which has an ultimate end, ſhort of the Glory of God, & that does not terminate in him, can be no *good* Action. For God ought to be the End as well as the Beginning of all our ways; and

even

even our moſt indifferent Actions ought to have a reference to his Glory, acccording to that general Advice of the Apoſtle, *Whether you eat or drink, or whatſoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.*

35. But in caſe the Action be of a doubtful & uncertain Nature, & carry in it a double Appearance, ſo that you have ſome Diffidence and Suſpence in your Reſolutions about it, I would then adviſe you for the greater Security of your Innocence, to conſider, what you think Jeſus Chriſt, if he were now upon Earth, according to the Idea you have of him from the account of his Life in the Goſpels, would do in ſuch a caſe. Whether he who ſought the Glory, & was conformable to the Will of God in all things, would do ſuch an Action or no. If you think upon a due Eſtimation & Collation of things that he would not, neither by my advice ſhould you. For to be ſure that which would not become *Chriſt* to do, can never be fit for a *Chriſtian.*

36. To exemplifie theſe two Rules, by an Inſtance applicable to both: Suppoſe you were invited or otherwiſe diſpoſed to go to a *Ball* or a *Play*; before you adventure to do ſo, I would adviſe you to pauſe a while, and conſider, whether you can poſſibly make any reference of ſuch an Action as that is, to the Glory of God; whether you can in any true Senſe or real meaning ſay thus, Lord I do this thing, I go to this *Play* or this *Ball*, for thee and for thy ſake; in the force of thy Love, & in purſuance of thy Glory. If your Conſcience anſwers no, I would by

by no means adviſe you to go. But if it anſwers doubtfully and with heſitation and ſuſpence, I would then have you put your ſelves to this Queſtion, Whether or no you do in your Conſcience really think, that the Holy and bleſſed Jeſus, according to that Character and Repreſentation you have of him, and his way of living in the Goſpel, would, if now again upon Earth, do ſuch an Action? Whether you do verily think that it would conſiſt with that grave, ſerious and recollected Spirit, and that conſtant air of Devotion and religious Severity, which appear'd in our Saviour's ordinary Life, and the general way of his Converſation to go to a Play or a Ball, and whether you think he would do it? If upon a ſerious Conſideration you think he would not, whatever plauſible Arguments you may hear from others, or ſuggeſt to your ſelves for the Lawfulneſs of it, I would by no means adviſe you to venture upon ſuch an Action, to do that which you your ſelves at the ſame time think your Lord and Maſter would not do; and yet, which conſidering the ſtrength of his Vertue, and that Force and Power he had to withſtand the greateſt Temptations, he might more ſafely do than you.

37. To the foregoing Conſiderations I ſhall only add one more, and which I ſhall recommend to you as a general and very compendious Inſtrument for your aſſiſtance towards a holy and religious Life, and that is, That you would bring your ſelves to an habitual Senſe, and Conſideration of the *Omnipreſence* and *Omniſcience* of God, that by reaſon of the Infinity both of his Eſſence and Knowledge, he is preſent in every Place, and privy to every Thought, that you cannot go where he is not, or do what he does not ſee; that you have your Life, Motion and being in him, and that you are always under his Eye: that he is about your Path, and about your Bed, and ſpies out all your Ways, which are better known to him than they are to your ſelves; that he is an Eſſence without Bounds, and a Light without Darkneſs; that he ſees and knows every thing, and is every where; and that you cannot ſin againſt him, but you

muſt ſin in him. Conſider this, and *ſtand in awe and ſin not*; *Commune with your own Hearts and in your Chamber* (in your moſt ſecret Retirements) *and be ſtill*, having your Thoughts and Paſſions ſo quiet and compoſed, and in ſuch decent Silence and Repoſe, as becomes that awful Preſence you are in even when moſt alone. Habituate your ſelves to ſet God always *before you* as you are always *before him*; and let every place be to you as a Temple, as an Holy of Holies, yea, even as Heaven it ſelf; that ſo being always in his Light, and having your Eye fix'd upon his, you may not dare to commit any Indecency, leſt you be found guilty of that moſt aſtoniſhing Impudence of the Apoſtate Angels, of ſinning in the very *Face* and *Preſence* of God.

38. This is all that I have to offer you by way of rational *Reflection* and *Conſideration*, for your Increment to a holy Life, and your Aſſiſtance in it. I ſhall now only commend to you ſome few things by way of *Practice* and *Exerciſe*, in order to the ſame End, and ſo conclude all I have to ſay to you upon this occaſion.

39. If therefore you would be truly Good and Religious, Holy in all manner of Converſation, and govern your Lives and Actions well, let it be your firſt and great Care to govern your *Thoughts*, to look to the Springs and Wheels of your Intellectual Frame; and as the Wiſe Man adviſes, *To keep your Hearts with all diligence*, to keep 'em pure and undefil'd, ſince out of 'em are the Iſſues both of Life and Death: Which tho' a certain and neceſſary Duty, as being one of thoſe particular Improvements whereby the Chriſtian has advanc'd the Jewiſh Law, I would not have you look upon ſo much as a new Commandment of it ſelf as a more eaſy Method and Expedient of performing all the reſt.

40. Further, Be adviſ'd in all that you do to ſet your ſelves at the greateſt diſtance from Evil, to abſtain from all Appearances of it, and from all beginnings and approaches towards it. From all *Appearances* of it chiefly upon the account of others, and that you may avoid giving Scandal and Offence. From all *Beginnings* and

Approaches towards it chiefly for your own ſakes, as gaining a threefold Advantage by ſuch a diſtance, in that you will thereby enjoy a greater *Innocence*, greater *Eaſe*, and greater *Safety*. Greater Innocence, as being by this means intirely and wholly free from the Guilt of thoſe Sins which you forbear; not ſo much as being within the firſt Degrees, or touching upon the edges and borders of them. Greater eaſe, becauſe 'tis eaſier to abſtain from the firſt Beginnings of Sin, than from a further Progreſs in it after you have once begun. As 'tis eaſie to prevent your firſt Motions down a Hill, than to ſtop your deſcent when once in motion. Nor is there ſo much difficulty in not admitting, as in ejecting a Temptation after 'tis once lodg'd, and has been kindly entertain'd. And laſtly, by this practice you will enjoy a greater Safety, becauſe greater Eaſe; there being not ſo much danger of yielding to what you can ſo eaſily forbear, as to that whoſe forbearance is more painful and uneaſie. For the danger of chuſing Sin, increaſes according to the greatneſs of the Evil which you avoid by chuſing it; and he that would ſuffer four degrees of Pain rather than Sin, would yet perhaps rather Sin, than ſuffer five degrees of Pain. For which reaſon,

41. I adviſe you again, to leſſen as much as you can the natural weight of your Concupiſcence, by a *Privation* of *Pleaſure*, and by a continual denial and mortification of your Senſes and Paſſions. For the more you indulge your ſelves in the Enjoyment of Pleaſure, the more you inflame your natural Thirſt after it, and the more you make your ſelves ſlaves to it. And the leſs you indulge it, and the more ſparing and abſtemious you are in it, the more cold and indifferent you will grow towards it. Your deſires will contract themſelves for want of being gratified (as Men by much Faſting loſe their Stomachs) and after many repeated Denials, will at length ceaſe to crave, and ſo your natural Concupiſcence will decreaſe and abate much of its weight. Which you find to be a thing of vaſt Advantage and importance in order to a good Life. For by this mean

you will be the more fixt and ſteddy in adhering to your Duty, as having the leſs Temptation to tranſgreſs it; and not only ſo, but you will alſo make ſuch degrees of God's Grace become Succeſsful and Efficacious upon you, which otherwiſe would not be ſo, ſince a leſs meaſure of Grace will ſuffice, where there is leſs Concupiſcence to reſiſt it. For it is clear and certain, that the efficacy of Divine Grace does ordinarily depend upon the Diſpoſition in which it finds us, in relation to ſenſible Good, as the action of a Weight in a Ballance does depend, as to its effect, upon the power and force of the Weight that is oppoſite. And let me tell you, that this is the only certain way that you have in your power, to render the *Grace of God* prevalent and effectual. For 'tis with the Will of Man as with a *Ballance*, both whoſe Scales are charg'd with their reſpective Weights; in which, if you would have this or that determinate Scale weigh down, there are but two poſſible ways of doing it, either by adding more weight to that which you would have predominant, or leſſening the weight that is in the other. But now we cannot make the Grace of God efficacious the firſt way, by adding more weight to that Scale of the Will, (for we have not the Grace of God in our power or diſpoſal, ſo as to diſtribute what we pleaſe of it to our ſelves.) All therefore that we can do towards it, is only to leſſen the Weight of Concupiſcence that is in the other Scale, which indeed amounts to the ſame, as if more degrees of Grace were added; and by this means we may contribute to make the Grace of God ſucceſsful and victorious. Which I take to be the true reaſon and uſefulneſs of *Mortification* and *Self-denial*, which by Privation of ſenſible Pleaſure, leſſens the deſire or Concupiſcence of it, and ſo ſerves to further the prevalency and efficacy of Grace: upon which is grounded that remarkable Counſel given by our Saviour (the very ſame that I now give you) *He that will come after me, let him deny himſelf.*

42. To this Mortification of your Senſes and Paſſions, privation of ſenſible Pleaſures, I would have you in

in the next place (as far as the Circumſtances of your Life will allow) to join *Retreat* and *Solitude*; to converſe as much with your ſelves, and as little with the World as you can. Were the World never ſo much better than we find it is, or can hope it will, this would be very *expedient* Counſel; but as it now is, it is plainly *neceſſary*. For the preſent Corruption of the World is ſuch, that 'tis danger enough to live in it, tho' a Man be not very intimate, or much converſant with it. But as for thoſe that are ſo, their Condition is extreamly hazardous; and they had need have a much greater Meaſure of Grace than other Men, to make it ſecure. For if the *Friendſhip* of the World be (as St. *James* tells us) Enmity with God, ſure even to have familiar *Commerce* and intimate Converſation with it, cannot but greatly endanger our Intereſt in his Love. The truth is, there is little to be got, and a great deal to be loſt by being much abroad, and by uſing much the Converſation of Men; eſpecially in publick Places, and promiſcuous Companies. Their Hearts are generally Corrupt, and that makes their Diſcourſe ſo; which even when moſt Civil and beſt govern'd, ſerves for little elſe, but to raiſe falſe Ideas in the Minds of the Hearers, to confirm them in their Prejudices, to renew upon them their ill Impreſſions; and to inſinuate into them the Love of ſenſible Objects. The Language of the World is generally that of *Concupiſcence*; which being the leading and governing Principle in Mens Hearts, becomes the Spring that gives Motion to their Tongues; and is the Seiſin and Leven that mixes and diffuſes it ſelf with all their Communications; which therefore for the moſt part carry a poiſonous Breath, a Spirit of Malignity with them; and at beſt, are impertinent and fallacious, full of illuſion and deceit, miſrepreſenting, confounding and tranſpoſing the Natures of things; putting Evil for Good, and Good for Evil; Darkneſs for Light, and Light for Darkneſs; and teaching Men to apprehend things either quite otherwiſe, or at leaſt much greater or leſs than they really are;

and ſo utterly deceiving them either in the Nature, or in the proportion of Things. But after all, the *Examples* of the World are by much more Dangerous than its *Diſcourſings*; and good Manners are more corrupted by its ill *Preſidents*, than by its ill *Communications*. For beſides that, generally Mens way of living is leſs Conformable to Order and Reaſon than their Diſcourſe, (it being more eaſie to talk well, than to act well) there is alſo this further difference, that their Example is a breathing and living Language, a Language that enters and perſwades thoſe to whom it is addreſſed, a Language that every body underſtands; and (ſuch is the force of imitation) which very few find it in their power to reſiſt. We can lend an Ear to what People talk, without being preſently or very much diſpoſed to Act it; but there is a ſort of Sympathy in us that inclines us, even before we think of it, and as it were *Mechanically* to do what we ſee others do. And beſides we think our ſelves in a manner obliged to do it, upon a miſtaken Notion of Civility and Complaiſance, and to avoid the unpardonable Offence of being ſingular, and of Condemning the general by our own private Conduct. And therefore, ſince upon both theſe Accounts, there is ſo much danger in Society, (I ſpeak of *Common* Society; for I am not converſing with a few well choſen Friends;) and conſidering the malignity of popular Diſcourſes and Examples, you can hardly Converſe much in the World without partaking of its Spirit, and being ſeis'd by its Infection, I would adviſe you to retire from it as much as conveniently you can; and declining all unneceſſary Ingagements and Alliances, to betake your ſelves to the ſafe Harbour of Solitude and Retreat; where you may breath a purer Air, live to God and your ſelves; attend with leſs Diſtraction upon the grand Concern, and withal, pray for thoſe who are out abroad, and *paſſing the Waves of this troubleſome World.*

43. And that you may employ your Solitude the better,

better, I would have you retire much within your ſelves, as well as from the Noiſe and Tumult of the World: Converſe much with your own Thoughts (which when all is done, you will find to be the beſt and moſt inſtructive Company) obſerve narrowly the Movements of your Wills and Affections; examine your Lives, make frequent Reflections upon the State of your Souls, and endeavour to improve the Perfection both of your intellectual and Moral Part, by meditating upon the beſt Subjects, and by reading the beſt Books. And thoſe I call ſo, which favour moſt of the Life and Spirit of Religion; and are moſt apt to transfuſe it into the Hearts and Minds of their Readers. As for *Plays* and *Romances*, I would have you wholly decline the uſe of them. For that's to defeat the ends of your Retirement by bringing the World into your Cloſet. And for ought I know, you were better be abroad and publick in the World, than to have the World with you thus in private. Not that I think the reading ſuch Books abſolutely unlawful; but only that there is a great deal of Danger and Corruption in them: And that as to the Wit, Language, and other Embelliſhments that they pretend to, and for which the Admirers of them recommend their Uſe, the ſame may be met with in better Books; which have all the *Beauty* and *Sweetneſs*, without the *Poiſon*. Nor would I have you beſtow much time in reading Books of *Controverſie*, & Diſputes about *Religion*: 'Tis a thing of great Labour, and but little Profit, there being not ſo much *Truth* gain'd by it as will compenſate for the loſs of *Charity*. For that which the World is pleas'd to call *Controverſie*, is generally little elſe than a *Litigious Wrangle*, proceeding upon Darkneſs and Obſcurity, Fallacies and Equivocations, double Acceptations of Words, and Confuſion of Ideas; from Mens miſtaking and miſtating the thing in Queſtion; from miſunderſtanding of the Point, of themſelves, and of one another. And while Men do ſo, they may diſpute for ever, without knowing when they agree, or when they differ. Leave therefore theſe Wran-

glers

glers to enjoy the Duſt which they raiſe, and while they *Diſpute* do you learn to *Live*. Only *Philoſophy* I would not have you neglect; but if you have Education and Opportunity for it, to make a conſiderable part of your Study. For that will open and enlarge your Minds, give you true thorough Views and Ideas of things, bring you acquainted with your ſelves as well as with external Nature, and lay an excellent Ground and Foundation for Morality and Religion. But when I ſpeak of Philoſophy, I mean true Philoſophy; not that which reigns in the Schools, (which after a great deal of Time and Pains ſpent in it, I think to be a mere Fantaſtick *Amuſement*, made up of inſignificant Terms, and a company of looſe indeterminate Maxims, all built upon dark unintelligible Principles; and therefore to be as great a Corruption of the *Underſtanding*, as ſome of thoſe things but now mention'd are of the *Will* and *Manners*) but the *Carteſian* and the *Experimental* Philoſophy. But becauſe the latter of theſe will require a greater ſtock of Wealth and Temporal Eſtate, for the due Proſecution of it, than you are ever like to receive from me, I mention it only for order's ſake, adviſing you chiefly to imploy what vacant hours you have from things of an higher Importance, in the thorough ſtudy and repeated peruſal of *Deſcartes* his Philoſophy: Which notwithſtanding the Imputation of Atheiſm, which ſome are pleaſed to throw upon it (a filly Charge, and ſuch as nothing but their Ignorance of him can excuſe) I take to be the only intelligible Frame of natural Science that has yet appear'd in the World, and the only intire Syſtem that deſerves the name of Philoſophy. And tho' perhaps every thing be not exactly true in it, yet I think there is nothing in it but what is *truly intelligible*; and withal that there is ſo much of real Truth in it, as if well purſued, will lead you into a great deal more; and ſuch Truths too, as are of the greateſt Importance in order to a well-principled Theory of Morality and Religion. But *Religion*, for that ought to be the end of all, and

ther I must again return, advising you to employ your solitude and Retirement chiefly in the Religious and Devotional part, in Prayer and Divine Meditations, and in reading the holy Scriptures, and other good and profitable Books, and ever to remember, that in the greatest Solitude you are not *alone*.

44. But whether you be in Solitude or in Company, let this be your general Rule and Practice, *To study the imitation of Christ*, to form your selves upon his Model, and to conform your inward Spirit, and your outward Conversation, to his divine Example, who spent his Solitudes in Devotion, and his more publick Converses in Works of Mercy and Charity, in doing good both to the Bodies and to the Souls of Men. Jesus Christ is propos'd to us as our great Pattern and Example, as well as Law-giver and Teacher; and he would not have been a compleat Teacher without it, his Example being one (and perhaps the most powerful) way whereby he teaches us. One great Reason of our Saviour's leading such an excellent and exact Life was, that we might take a Copy of it, and use it as a Pattern and Model upon all Occasions; and it may be this is the only reason of its being recorded and transmitted to Posterity, that among the infinite ill Examples we continually meet with in the World, we might have one standing and never failing President, both for our direction and our Encouragement in the ways of Holiness. And indeed 'tis the best Pattern we have, and the only one which we can intirely follow, & which alone will lead us to Heaven. Christ is a sure and safe Guide, and such as may be follow'd without Doubt or Danger. For so he himself tells us, that he is the Way, the Truth and the Life, and that he that follows him walks not in Darkness; as indeed how should he, having the true Light of the World before him. Let me therefore conclude all my Spiritual Instructions with this general Advice, To form to your selves in the first place, from frequent reading of the Gospel, as true an Idea of the Spirit and Life of Christ, as possible you

can. And then to form your own Spirits and Lives upon this Divine Model, conſulting this great Idea in all Accidents and Emergencies, having it always before you, and your Eye ſteddily fix'd upon it, that ſo you may draw as near the Life as may be, and may as far as the Condition of humane Infirmity will permit, be Followers of God as dear Children. Conſider him therefore in his Retirements, when converſing with God; and conſider him in Company, when converſing with the World. Place him to your Eye in both Lights, and ſtudy to imitate his Devotion in the former, and his great Charity in the latter; that ſo joining the Excellencies of his active and contemplative Life together, and endeavouring to tranſcribe his Obedience to both the Tables of the Law, you may compleat and fill up your meaſure of Righteouſneſs, ever remembring that he is the *beſt Chriſtian*, not that knows moſt, or believes moſt, or that can talk moſt of Chriſtianity, but, who is in the Heart and Life the neareſt *Follower* of *Chriſt*.

45. Theſe (my Children) are the moſt material and fundamental Inſtances of Spiritual Counſel I have to bequeath to you, being the Reſults of my own Reaſon and Experience, which I adviſe you to conſider and to follow, and if you find (as I hope you will) benefit by them, be the more diligent in the uſe and obſervation of them, and the more Thankful to God for his Grace, upon all your Endeavours begging his Bleſſing. To whoſe eſpecial Care and good Providence I commit you, beſeeching him to beſtow both upon *you* and *me* ſuch a meaſure of his gracious Aſſiſtance, that we may all ſo live in his Fear, as to die in his Favour, and at laſt meet together in the Bleſſed Enjoyment of his eternal Glory. *Amen.*

POSTSCRIPT.

THere are two Advices more that I ſhould have commended to you, and which you ſhall now have

have in the ſame order as they occur to my Thoughts. One of them is by way of *Conſideration*, and the other is by way of *Practice*. That by way of Conſideration is this, That you would conſider that there can be no true Enjoyment of Life, till you are got above the Fear of Death, that alone being enough to ſtrike a Damp into all your Pleaſures and Enjoyments. And that the only thing that can put you above the Fear of Death, is a good Life. And that therefore even upon this Account there is an abſolute Neceſſity of living well, that you may live with any tolerable comfort or ſatisfaction, that you may enjoy your Lives while you have them. The other by way of Practice is this, That you would have ſuch a continual Watch and Guard upon your Thoughts and Actions, as never to tolerate your ſelves in ſuch a State of Life, as you would be afraid to die in. Becauſe, conſidering the uncertainty of Death, there is no aſſignable part of the Time you live in, but what you may die in.

A General Prayer.

I Adore thee O thou infinitely Great and Good God Maker and Lord of Heaven and Earth: Worthy art thou O Lord, to receive all Honour and Power; for thou haſt Created all things, and for thy Pleaſure they are and were Created.

Send thy holy Spirit, O moſt merciful Father, upon me thy Servant; and ſo fill me with thy Heavenly Grace and Benediction, that I may become a living Temple ſanctified and devoted to thy Honour and Service; and ſuch wherein thou mayeſt delight to dwell, and make the place of thy reſt and abode both now and for ever.

And to this end grant me ſeriouſly to conſider what thou art, what I my ſelf am, and what I ought to be. That thou art a God greatly to be fear'd for thy Power and Juſtice, greatly to be loved for thy infinite Perfection and Goodneſs, and greatly to be prais'd for thy liberal Bounty and Loving-kindneſs That thou art both the Author and the End of my Being, my true and only Good, the Cauſe of all my Joy and Happineſs; and the great Centre and Stay of thy whole Creation.

Grant

Grant me alſo ſeriouſly to conſider what I my ſelf am, that I am a Creature; One that once was not, and is now a poor, empty, weak and imperfect Being. That I have nothing but what I receive from thee, that I can do nothing but what I do by thee, that I can know nothing but what I know in thee and in thy Light: and that in thee I have my Life, my Motion, my Being, my Happineſs and my all.

Grant me alſo ſeriouſly to conſider, that I am not only thy Creature, but my own; not only a Creature, but a ſinful Creature; a Creature acting againſt the End of his Creation; againſt the Law of his Creator; againſt the Dignity of his Nature, and againſt his true and beſt Intereſt, both here and hereafter. That I have not loved thee as in ſtrictneſs I ought; with my whole Heart, Soul, and Mind and Strength, nor as I might, according to the Meaſures of thy Grace, and my preſent Abilities; nor indeed as I have loved this World, and the Vanities of it, having been a lover of Pleaſure more than a lover of God.

Grant me alſo laſtly, thy Grace ſeriouſly to conſider what I ſhould be both towards Thee, my Neighbour, and my Self. That I ought to be Holy, Juſt, Charitable and Temperate. That I ought not to live careleſly and at random as thoſe that have no Senſe of thee, nor of their Duty, and that believe neither Heaven nor Hell; but as one that now lives in thy Preſence, and muſt hereafter give thee an account, and be eternally Happy or eternally Miſerable, according as he demeans himſelf in this ſhort time of Trial. And that therefore denying all Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, I ſhould live Godly, Righteouſly and Soberly in this preſent World; looking for that bleſſed Hope, and the Glorious appearing of the Great God, and of our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt. Fix, O Lord, theſe Conſiderations in my mind, and let them ſink down deep into my heart, that they may bring forth in me the Fruits of good living; that ſo my Spirit may be Pure and Right within me, my Life may be Holy, my Death Comfortable, my Reſurrection Joyful, and my eternal State Happy and Glorious with thee my God for ever. Amen.

FINIS.